CLAIMS

1. A process control method comprising:

retrieving a stored electronic map associated with a process to be performed;

performing tasks of the process while following the electronic map; and

while performing the tasks, accessing stored information from files external to the electronic map and associated with the process by actuating a graphical item of the display device with a pointing device.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein accessing stored information comprises:

clicking a hyperlink displayed on the display device;

retrieving a file stored at a location indicated by the hyperlink;

presenting user information on the display device using the retrieved file.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein accessing stored information comprises:

retrieving a stored electronic audio file for use in association with performing the tasks of the process.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein accessing stored information comprises:

retrieving a stored electronic video file for use in association with performing the tasks of the process.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein accessing stored information comprises:

retrieving a stored electronic document for use in association with performing the tasks of the process.

6. The method of claim 5 wherein retrieving stored electronic documents comprises:

retrieving one or more documents containing information required for a task of the process.

7. The method of claim 5 wherein retrieving stored electronic documents comprises:

retrieving one or more documents containing explanatory information about a task of the process.

8. The method of claim 1 wherein accessing stored information comprises:

retrieving audible information to hear a training briefing while following the electronic map.

9. The method of claim 8 wherein accessing stored information further comprises:

retrieving visual information associated with the audible information of the training briefing.

10. The method of claim 1 wherein performing tasks of the process comprises:

retrieving one or more initial input items as designated by the electronic map; and

operating on the one or more initial input items as designated by one or more tasks shown on the electronic map.

11. The method of claim 10 wherein retrieving one or more initial input items comprises:

retrieving at least one of a document, a report, a product, a sample, a form and test results from a source indicated by the electronic map.

12. The method of claim 10 further comprising:

retrieving one or more task input items as designated by the electronic map; and

operating on the one or more task input items as designated by one or more tasks shown on the electronic map.

13. The method of claim 12 wherein retrieving one or more task input items comprises:

retrieving at least one of a document, a report, a product, a sample, a form and test results from a source indicated by the electronic map.

14. The method of claim 1 further comprising:

while performing the tasks, producing one or more output items as designated by the electronic map.

15. The method of claim 14 wherein producing one or more output items comprises producing task output as designated by the electronic map.

16. The method of claim 14 wherein producing one or more output items comprises producing a process output as designated by the electronic map.

17. The method of claim 14 wherein producing one or more output items comprises producing at least one of a document, test results, a report and a product as designated by the electronic map.

18. The method of claim 14 wherein producing one or more output items comprises actuating a feedback button of the electronic map to communicate task information to a map maintainer.

19. The method of claim 14 further comprising conveying the one or more output items to a delivery target in accordance with the electronic map.

20. The method of claim 1 wherein accessing stored information comprises:

using a browser application, clicking a hyperlink associated with a task;

redirecting the browser application to a location indicated by the hyperlink;

initiating a new application external to the electronic map; and

displaying stored information associated with the task using the application external to the electronic map.

21. The method of claim 1 wherein accessing stored information comprises:

clicking a regulatory flag hyperlink associated with a task;

displaying explanatory information about the regulatory significance of the task.

22. The method of claim 21 wherein accessing stored information further comprises:

displaying a hyperlink to a regulatory agency web site associated with the task.

23. The method of claim 1 wherein retrieving a stored electronic map comprises:

initiating a computer application on a data processing device;

accessing a stored file containing data defining the electronic map; and

using the data, producing a map display on the display device.

24. A visual electronic map for a process, the electronic map being displayable on a display device and comprising:

standard task symbols positioned in standard locations of pages of the map;

standard input symbols positioned in standard input locations of the pages of the map;

standard output symbols positioned in standard output locations of the pages of the map;

connectors between symbols, the connectors, the standard locations, the standard input locations and the standard output locations chosen to show process flow; and

data links between respective symbols and respective data files stored on a storage device, each respective data file storing information related to a respective symbol associated with the respective data file, the data links including training links to training material stored in a data file and accessible by actuating one or more of the training links.

25. The visual electronic map of claim 24 further comprising:

responsibility symbols positioned adjacent related task symbols to indicate a party responsible for performance of a task associated with the task symbol.

26. An electronic mapping method comprising:

identifying a process to be completed;

identifying tasks to be performed for completion of the process;

identifying required input items and output items of the process;

in an electronic map, positioning task symbols in a standard task area of pages of the electronic map, each task symbol corresponding to a task to be performed and each task symbol being positioned below a previous task symbol on the same page to clarify process flow;

associating remotely stored data with at least some of the task symbols, including linking online training materials for a task with a task symbol; and

in the electronic map, positioning input symbols to one side of the standard task area and positioning output symbols to another side of the standard task area to clarify process flow in the electronic map.

27. The electronic mapping method of claim 26 wherein the task symbols, the input symbols and the output symbols are common to a family of electronic maps.

28. The electronic mapping method of claim 26 wherein associating comprises hyperlinking a symbol with data.

29. The electronic mapping method of claim 26 further comprising verifying training in performance of the task by an electronic map operator before completion of the task.

30. The electronic mapping method of claim 26 wherein associating comprises linking at least one of online audio files, video files or static display files for playback to and electronic map operator.

31. The electronic mapping method of claim 26 wherein associating comprises linking a symbol to online documentation files with additional information about the task associated with the symbol.

32. The electronic mapping method of claim 26 further comprising:

positioning task symbols and at least one of input symbols and output symbols on a first map page;

positioning additional task symbols and at least one of output symbols and input symbols on a second map page;

positioning page link symbols on the first map page; and

associating page link symbols on the second map page with respective page link symbols on the first map page for navigation between the first map page and the second map page.

33. The electronic mapping method of claim 26 wherein the page link symbols are positioned to align one of an x axis and a y axis of the first map page with a like axis of the second map page.

34. The electronic mapping method of claim 33 wherein the page link symbols are positioned to align a z axis of the first map page with a z axis of the second map page.

35. A regulatory compliance method for a business process, the method comprising:

activating a visual electronic map on a display device;

training a user using training information electronically linked to the electronic map;

performing steps of the business process in conjunction with defined tasks and task ordering of the electronic map;

when required, electronically accessing additional information by linking to the additional information from the electronic map; and

upon completion of the business process, producing a regulatory record of compliance with regulations.

36. The regulatory compliance method of claim 35 further comprising:

verifying a training status of the user before providing access to one or more tasks of the electronic map.

37. The regulatory compliance method of claim 36 further comprising:

assessing the user's qualification before providing access to one or more tasks of the electronic map.

38. The regulatory compliance method of claim 36 further comprising: comparing the user's training history with training requirements for one or more tasks of the electronic map.

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39. The regulatory compliance method of claim 36 further comprising: providing on the electronic map a regulatory flag for tasks having a regulatory impact in the business process.